

# **HOUSE . . . . . No. 561**

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By Mr. Sciortino of Medford, petition of Carl M. Sciortino, Jr., and others that the Board of Education establish an alternative high school student assessment system based on multiple measures of performance. Education.

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## **The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

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### **PETITION OF:**

Carl M. Sciortino, Jr.	Willie Mae Allen
Frank I. Smizik	Steven J. D'Amico
Alice K. Wolf	Harriette L. Chandler
Tom Sannicandro	Dianne Wilkerson
Patricia D. Jehlen	Kay Khan
Cynthia S. Creem	Pamela P. Resor
Denise Provost	Elizabeth A. Malia
Benjamin Swan	John D. Keenan
Douglas W. Petersen	Pam Richardson
David Paul Linsky	Thomas J. Calter
Sarah K. Peake	Thomas P. Conroy
Michael E. Festa	Kathi-Anne Reinstein
Steven A. Tolman	Alice Hanlon Peisch
Ruth B. Balser	Christine E. Canavan
Michael F. Rush	Paul Kujawski
Matthew C. Patrick	

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In the Year Two Thousand and Seven.

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### **AN ACT TO ENHANCE THE MASSACHUSETTS COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT SYSTEM TO ENSURE THAT ALL HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES MEET THE STATE'S STANDARDS.**

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:*

1     SECTION 1. It is the intent of the Legislature to ensure that all  
2 students in public schools have the opportunity to learn what they  
3 need to know to receive a high school diploma, and that all high  
4 school graduates will have met the state's standards for competency,  
5 as required by Section 1D of chapter 69, as measured by the assess-  
6 ments required by Section 1I of chapter 69. This section states that,  
7 “(t)he system shall employ a variety of assessment instruments (that)

8 (a)s much as practicable, especially in the case of students whose  
9 performance is difficult to assess using conventional methods, such  
10 instruments shall include consideration of work samples, projects  
11 and portfolios, and shall facilitate authentic and direct gauges of stu-  
12 dent performance.” The Legislature hereby finds that the require-  
13 ment established by the Board of Education that students may not  
14 graduate from high school without a certain minimum score on the  
15 MCAS Language Arts and Math standardized tests, even if students  
16 have met the competency requirements through other methods of  
17 assessment, including coursework, violates the intent and spirit of  
18 the Education Reform Act (ERA) of 1993. Further, the Legislature  
19 finds that the failure to assess students fairly and accurately, specifi-  
20 cally by failing to use a variety of assessment instruments, and the  
21 over-reliance on the MCAS tests to determine high school gradu-  
22 ation has led to the narrowing of the curriculum and the elimination  
23 of essential courses, programs and activities in our public schools,  
24 thus limiting the educational opportunities for all students and  
25 resulting in the failure of our public schools to educate the “whole  
26 child”. It has also led to an increase in the drop-out rate for high  
27 school students and has severely limited the job opportunities and  
28 higher educational opportunities for the tens of thousands of young  
29 people who have not received a high school diploma. In order to ful-  
30 fill the original intent of the ERA, amendments to the law are neces-  
31 sary to specifically require that the competency determination for  
32 high school graduation can be met by using multiple assessment  
33 methods, including the MCAS tests, to evaluate a student’s readiness  
34 to graduate. These changes recognize all of the state’s graduation  
35 requirements and honor a well-rounded, rigorous and challenging  
36 education experience. This new system also recognizes that, while  
37 all students can learn at high levels, many demonstrate competencies  
38 through various strengths and learning styles and develop at dif-  
39 fering rates over time. The Legislature believes that this new, mul-  
40 tiple assessment system will provide a more accurate picture of  
41 students’ knowledge and skills and will give students hope and  
42 reason to complete their high school education.

1 SECTION 2. Section 1I of Chapter 69 of the General Laws, as  
2 appearing in the 2004 Official Edition, is hereby amended by adding  
3 after the fourth paragraph the following paragraph:—

4     For purposes of satisfying the requirements of the competency  
5 determination as a condition of high school graduation, as required  
6 in section one D, the board of education shall promulgate regulations  
7 to implement a high school student assessment system to be devel-  
8 oped by the Massachusetts High School Graduation Requirement  
9 Committee, which shall be based upon multiple relevant measures of  
10 performance, using multiple formats, and that allows students who  
11 do not meet minimum scores on state standardized tests, such as  
12 MCAS tests, to offset these scores with other measures of perfor-  
13 mance so that all students, including those with disabilities and lim-  
14 ited English proficiency, have the opportunity to demonstrate their  
15 competence to graduate from high school.

16     The Committee shall be composed of 31 members, as follows:—  
17 one representative selected by each of the following organiza-  
18 tions:— the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents,  
19 the Massachusetts Teachers Association, the American Federation of  
20 Teachers/Massachusetts, the Massachusetts Association of School  
21 Committees, the Massachusetts Parent Teachers Association, and the  
22 Massachusetts Association of Secondary School Administrators,  
23 Massachusetts Administrators for Special Education, Massachusetts  
24 Association of Vocational Administrators, Massachusetts Advocates  
25 for Children, the National Board of Education Testing and Public  
26 Policy at Boston College; FairTest, the New England Association of  
27 College Admission Counseling, Massachusetts Business Alliance for  
28 Education and the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce; one rep-  
29 resentative selected by the state affiliate of each of the following  
30 organizations:— the Association for Supervision and Curriculum  
31 Development, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, the  
32 National Council of Teachers of English, the National Association of  
33 Bilingual Educators, the National Association of Science Teachers,  
34 the National Technology Education Association, the Association for  
35 Career and Technical Education, the National Association for  
36 Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, the National Art  
37 Education Association, the National Music Educators Association,  
38 the National Council for the Social Studies, the National Council for  
39 History Education, the National Geographic Alliance and the  
40 National Foreign Language Association; and, one representative  
41 selected by the Governor from each of the following systems:— the  
42 University of Massachusetts, Massachusetts State Colleges and

43 Massachusetts Community Colleges. One member of the committee  
44 shall be designated by the Governor to serve as chairperson of the  
45 committee. The committee shall hold public hearings across the  
46 Commonwealth and shall solicit testimony from and consult with  
47 public school officials, educators and staff, with public higher educa-  
48 tion officials, faculty and staff and with the general public. Members  
49 shall not be compensated for their service but may be reimbursed for  
50 necessary expenses incurred in the performance of their duties. The  
51 department shall provide staff and other resources to the Committee  
52 to enable it to carry out its work and may request a supplemental  
53 appropriation to reimburse the department for the costs associated  
54 with the work of the Committee. The Committee shall submit its  
55 plan for a new assessment system to the Board no later than  
56 December 31, 2008 and shall at the same time file copies of the plan  
57 with the Joint Committee on Education. The Board shall promulgate  
58 regulations no later than December 31, 2009.

1 SECTION 3. Until such time as the regulations for the new high  
2 school assessment system are promulgated, as required by Section  
3 Two of this Act, no public school student may be denied a high  
4 school diploma for the failure to attain a passing score on the MCAS  
5 tests, provided however, that a student may be denied a high school  
6 diploma for the failure to meet any other graduation requirement of  
7 his or her high school; and, provided further, that the regulations for  
8 the new high school assessment system, as required by Section Two  
9 of this Act, shall not be effective until said regulations are approved  
10 by a majority vote of the Legislature's Joint Committee on Educa-  
11 tion.